

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**  
**FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**  
**January 26, 2005 @ 4:30 p.m. Council Chambers**

**PRESENT**

Ian Kohen  
Cindy Felsten  
Chrystal Pushor  
Marie Schroeder  
Barbara Stevens  
Dick Underdahl-Peirce  
Madhu Vedak

**ABSENT**

Jay Myers  
Gil Palmer  
Jason Staley  
Wes Roy

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith,  
Secretary Lula Young (left early-family emergency)  
**Visitors present:** Joie Ayala

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

**Commissioner Pushor moved to accept the minutes of the regular full commission meeting of December 15, 2004. Commissioner Felsten seconded. Motion passed.**

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Director Tinsley advised the current balance is approximately at \$3,854.82. Due to software changes implemented by the Clerk-Treasurer's office, their records reflected a higher balance. An accurate balance will be reported once reconciled with the Clerk-Treasurer's records.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Director Tinsley congratulated Commissioner Schroeder on a successful mediation on a disability in public accommodation case. Both parties signed the settlement. Commissioner Felsten has agreed to mediate a new complaint involving sex and disability discrimination in housing, scheduled in February. Director Tinsley stated she would send out a notice to new commissioners listing the date and time of a training opportunity. Director Tinsley advised she has been contacted by a local employer's legal counsel involving another race in employment case, that mediation will be scheduled and commissioners will be notified.

Commission reappointments: After some discussion with Martha Myers, City Council Commission Liaison, Director Tinsley advised that Ms. Myers would like to reappoint all current commissioners. Council member Myers also advised that Craig Hawes will return in March

2005 and council will most likely reappoint him as the Commission's liaison. Director Tinsley stated that new council member, Jesse Brand, was appointed by the Republican Party.

Director Tinsley informed commissioners of the efforts of Deputy Director Lorraine Smith, board member of Kidscommons, who is working on accessibility issues relating to the new museum location. Larry Snyder, a friend of the Human Rights Commission, has also provided consultation on the ADA and the Indiana Accessibility Code at our request and at no charge, as a favor to the Commission. Mr. Snyder also serves on the Governor's Planning Council for People with Disabilities.

Director Tinsley encouraged commissioners to attend the Welcoming Community presentations scheduled for Thursday and Friday January 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>, located in the Meeting Hall. The presentation is the result of the Focus Group Surveys. Tracy Souza will make the presentation. The presentation will focus on what factors make Columbus a welcoming place, what is being done well and what needs improvement.

Director Tinsley informed Commissioners that The Mayor's State of the City address is February 1<sup>st</sup>, at 5:30 p.m.

Director Tinsley introduced community guest, Joie Ayala, a teacher at Northside Middle School, to the commissioners. Director Tinsley explained the function and appointment of commissioners and staff responsibilities within the Human Rights Commission.

Director Tinsley informed commissioners of upcoming trainings being sponsored by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce on February 15<sup>th</sup> and March 11<sup>th</sup>. Also, there will be a Public Comment session held by Vocational Rehabilitation in the Meeting Hall on February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Director Tinsley provided an overview of her presentation to the Rotary Club on January 17<sup>th</sup> and the trainings she has provided the Columbus Police Department on Thursdays during the month of January. Evaluations received from officers to date have been favorable.

Director Tinsley requested Commissioner assistance to determine a deadline for receipt of Laws Award nominations. A minimum of 30 days is needed to publicize the recipient's name. Commissioners generally agreed that a decision could be made at the March full commission meeting or the 31<sup>st</sup>. The Laws nomination committee of Dick Underdahl-Peirce, Jason Staley and committee chair, Cindy Felsten will meet and present a Laws Award candidate. Their recommendation is not binding on Commissioners and Commissioners can review all nominees.

#### **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE/SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2005-06:**

Commissioner Myers will be contacting commissioners to create a Nominations Committee. Those Commissioners will contact nominees to verify their willingness to serve as an officer. The slate of officers will be presented for a vote in February.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION FORUM:**

Director Tinsley reported that she has received many positive comments regarding Wes Roy who served as moderator for the Martin Luther King Day breakfast. Community Development, who organized the breakfast, created a multimedia presentation of videotape and newspaper articles on area hate crimes and incidents in Columbus and Seymour. CHRC provided the news clippings for the organizers. Bishop Charles Sims and Juana Watson, speakers during

the breakfast, were well received as well as Charlie Nelms, vice president for student development at Indiana University, during the evening presentation at Second Baptist Church.

### **LIAISON UPDATES - GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE:**

Commissioner Felsten advised the GS/A will be meeting in the week to follow. She anticipates an active meeting with the recent court decision handed down that defines marriage as being between a man and woman. Commissioner Felsten also reviewed with Commissioners legislative efforts to change the constitution by restricting the definition of marriage and a discussion ensued between Commissioners regarding various legislative priorities involving gay rights: protection in the workplace and gay marriage and/or civil unions.

### **ANNUAL DINNER:**

Professor Alvin Chambliss has agreed to be the keynote speaker and will be joined by his wife at the dinner. Professor Chambliss was the plaintiff's attorney in the Ayers case that originated in Mississippi. The case, a discrimination in education suit, alleged difference in treatment between the historically African-American universities and white universities. It was a 25 year, class-action civil rights lawsuit resolved in 2004 for a settlement of over 500 million dollars. He is also the attorney that represented the family of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas.

The date has been set for May 5<sup>th</sup>. Staff is currently negotiating with Harrison Lake and Holiday Inn. The Commons is also being explored as the Arts Council is working more closely with non-profit groups to encourage booking more non-profit functions there.

### **Hate Crimes/Orientation Training:**

Director Tinsley presented the Hates Crimes training to Commissioners (PowerPoint presentation) that she has been presenting throughout the month of January for the Columbus Police Department.

### **ADJOURN:**

**It was MOVED and SECONDED to adjourn the meeting, which was supported in a unanimous vote. Meeting adjourned.**